

10/10/16
Week 42: Shoes and Smiles
James and Betty Robison
Julie Lyles Carr

James: Oh, boy! Hey! Y'all are all right. Welcome! I'm James Robison. Betty and I welcome you to *LIFE Today*.

Now here is just the cutest little kid. Just looks like a little kid ought to look sitting on a suitcase and going to fly away. Julie Lyles Carr wrote this book, *Raising an Original*. Julie has eight children. But she had a couple little, I don't know if you would say shock waves come through this journey with all these children, but it was definitely an unexpected challenge.

The amazing thing is what God has done in the life of this family, mom and dad, children, that enables them to pass on something to all of us who have suffered in some way, pain or wondering why? Why this? Why us? Why them? And I think all of us ask those questions.

This is amazing the way Julie deals with it. Would you welcome Julie Lyles Carr to *LIFE Today*?

[Applause]

Julie: Thank you for having me!

James: Julie, you're in a church in Austin. What's the name of it?

Julie: Life Austin.

James: Life Austin. I grew up there; lived there ten years. Now one of your church leaders are part of Phillips, Craig and Dean, who might that be?

Julie: That's Randy Phillips; he's our lead pastor.

James: Well, hey Randy! Thanks for letting Julie come. I love you! Phillips, Craig and Dean will always be special to me so y'all come back any time you want to.

Julie, you have eight children and this is a cute picture. Does that happen to be one of the children or is that just a kids' picture?

Julie: This is not, although if that one showed up at the house I probably wouldn't notice. I would just assume it was part of crew. [Laughing]

James: Did you know you were going to have a great big family?

Julie: Heaven's no. As my husband likes to say, my husband Mike says, "Spontaneity can cause people."

[Laughter]

So we did not set out to have eight children. As a matter of fact, I think one of Mike's proposals, because there were a few, but one of them was something like, "Would you travel the world with me? Would you build careers with me? Would you not have children? Would you..." I think that he really never really expected that we would have many kids.

James: What was his career that he was wanting you to travel on?

Julie: Well, he was wanting to do politics and travel and business and finance, all kinds of stuff. So we didn't really know or think that there might be kids involved in our future but at 15 months into our very brand-new marriage all of our 10 year plan went [flbb] and we had our daughter Madison. I thought she probably would be an only child.

Then some time went by and Mike says dangerous words in our house are "Maybe just one more." And the Lord began to really work on our hearts that he had a path for us that was going to be a little off road, was going to be a little different, and we just "how about one more" all the way to number seven and eight who were twins.

James: Tell us about this book because *Raising an Original* implies something. Of course, we think all of the children are original and unique. What are you wanting us to get even from the title and then where are you going to take us on this journey?

Julie: In parenting this many kids it would be so much more efficient to just cookie cutter them out and just say this is how we're going to do everything and this is going to be all the decisions for everybody. Of course, the borders of righteousness are firm so we got that but there is so much play in the field of grace for us to really experience these amazing people that God brings into our lives and embrace the originality that they have. Of course, anybody who

has a couple of kids knows that your kids can be so different from each other much and sometimes we seem to try to fight that.

And we talk about, as Christians, that we want our kids to have "normal childhoods" but the kids I read about in the Word of God were weird kids. God had some really interesting things for them to do, he took them in very different paths, he took them through very different experiences. And so as Christian parents to really embrace that we're to be raising originals, not copycats of this world, not copycats at all. God infuses such individuality into people.

Betty: Sometimes that can be more of a challenge than trying to make them all basically the same or react the same or have the same type of personality.

Julie: It's a whole lot messier.

James: I want to read something here if you don't mind. It's in the latter part of the book but I think it sets the stage for what you're going to appreciate, and I think we'll be benefited by, especially anyone who has had challenges or something occur or a surprise or some kind of situation that you just never anticipated.

Here's a scripture: You knit me together... you knit me together... you knit me together... So what happened, Lord? I you demand it. What happened when you were knitting Mason and Mercy together? Did you just drop a stitch?

And almost immediately I heard the timber of God's voice echo in my aching heart, the impression of thought that appears with comprehensive clarity. "Yes, yes. I did drop a stitch. And would you like to know why?"

It just got real. "Yes, sir," I replied.

"It's a simple thing to knit row upon row but when you want to create something of greater purpose, of greater function, you drop stitches. You can then make a cuff, a sleeve, a banding for buttonholes, something that has a more specific use. So yes, I did drop stitches because I have a specific intent."

I think you were asking that question maybe in both desperation, frustration, confusion, maybe even a degree of pain.

Julie: Absolutely. We discovered in 2001 that our fourth child, who was not developing language in the way that we thought would follow in a normal developmental progress, much to our shock we discovered that she had significant hearing loss. And the guilt of a parent to feel

like you've somehow missed that for two and a half years -- that we didn't know. So we walked through that with her. And when you experience that you're thrown immediately into a world of making all these decisions; the fiscal realities of what it takes with a child that you're going to need to get therapies for, that you're going to need to get medical devices for, and there were many times in those early days with Mason that I just kept thinking, Lord, I've got these other kids and I was pregnant with our fifth. And I kept thinking, Lord, we're trying to serve you with this ginormous -- what I thought was ginormous at the time. I had no idea what was coming! But what is the point of this?

But we made progress and we figured out what to do and God through a series of really miraculous events led us to the right people who were able to help with Mason.

We got on down the road and we were open to a bigger family, about our fifth child, our sixth child then discovered that we were pregnant with twins, which was a showstopper! And when our seventh child, one of the twins was about a year old we discovered that she had experienced a stroke at birth and that she had left-side hemiplegia, also called cerebral palsy. Me and my great spiritual maturity said, "God, we already punched the special needs card. We did this!" And "Why is this happening?"

And on this particular day of this particular prayer it had been one of those days that we had been working with Mason on language development and therapies. We had been with Mercy trying to get her walking and trying to really stretch that tight little arm and it almost seemed like that verse from Psalm 139 was almost mocking me. Like you knit me together? You knit me together? What happened? And yet what God began to unfold for me and show me was that he hadn't missed it. He knew what he was doing. He had created those girls specifically for a purpose.

Then he showed me something even more profound, which is we all have special needs. We are all differently abled. We all have things that maybe it's little more invisible, maybe we don't exactly have a call out on us that you can see it but all of us have areas of challenge, and many times as we know, it is those areas of challenge that God uses with people that becomes some of their greatest witness.

So we were really profoundly grateful to be able to start a foundation for families with children with special needs and offer the kids the ability to take dance classes and perform and ride horses and get tutoring and have date nights for moms and dads. Those are the moments where you get to catch a glimpse of the why because if I had not experienced these experiences with Mason and with Mercy, I wouldn't have known this huge population of parents out there who are floundering for help. They don't have situations in which they can celebrate their kids. There is no ancillary income left over for things like dance lessons.

So that little glimpse of a why can get you on mission, can carry you through. When you can take something that's really difficult and you can see God begin to transition it into something where you can make a difference, those are the moments that you just get a little sliver of what he's up to. He has such original stories to tell with all of his kids.

James: I think what you're saying when we are all original and we're all distinct, we're all diverse, we're all valuable, we're all special, we're all precious get it. Quit comparing yourselves with one another and get on with doing what God wants you to do in a difficult situation. Do you sense that's something you want people to hear and feel and experience?

Julie: Absolutely. I think that's part of what is so critical for us to get our heads around is that when God bestows us with children he's not asking us to just recreate something that has already existed before. The Word of God tells us that he places us in specific times, seasons, places for very specific purposes.

Sometimes in the church I think we get so focused we think that God's asked us to raise perfect children and he hasn't. He's asked us to raise purposed children and that is a very different thing.

When I look at some of the major players in the Word of God and I look at some of their childhoods and the unique ways in which they were gifted that didn't always show up or were very counterculture at the time. You have Moses educated in the best of Egyptian schools and he gets hauled out to become a shepherd for several years. But that's where he learned how to lead. I look at Joseph's really bizarre childhood of just being in such contention with his brothers and he ends up in an Egyptian prison. Who would have ever thought that in his original story he would go on to become a ruler? And yet God has infused in all of our stories these originalities.

Part of what I think is challenging for us as parents is we may go, "Yeah! I want to raise original kids. I get it. We need to infuse these things into our kids to develop a tribe of these warriors who know how to go out and stand against culture." But we haven't embraced for ourselves our own original stories. We weren't given permission as kids. We didn't know that we didn't have to be just like the one who sat by us on this side of the pew and the one that sat by us on this side of the pew. We didn't know that. So to begin to really begin that clarion call of look! You are unique; God has a special purpose for you. Live that well so we can raise the next generation well to be the originals that they were intended to be because that's how you begin to change a culture; that's how you begin to stand against is to have a group of kids who are told ahead of time, "You're going to be weird, people aren't going to get it and you have destiny and you have purpose and you don't have to match everybody around you."

James: How are you children doing that are such a challenge? One of them, didn't they have something recently happen that was a new experience?

Julie: Mason, who is 18, today was her first day of college, which is just amazing. Mercy is doing very, very well. She actually is on a competitive dance team this year.

James: How old is she?

Julie: She is nine. And so she's taking her message because she is the only child on this particular dance team who has a visible disability.

James: And she's handling the dance pretty well?

Julie: She is doing very well. She has an advocacy and she has a message to tell. So they're doing very, very well.

James: That's great. Betty and I had a mis-stitch when we lost a daughter. What do you say to somebody like us who looks and says, "Okay God, did you miss something here?" It wasn't like we didn't believe in miracles and this little girl, our baby girl who was a wonderful mother and wife, and believed; what's going on here? How do you comfort somebody like us?

Julie: I think the first moment is to understand that God's big enough for your why; that you can lean into that. It's not comfortable. It's messy. It doesn't fit the constructs.

Mike and I have talked about when we discovered Mason's diagnosis, Mercy's diagnosis, I kept thinking well, did I miss taking a prenatal vitamin? Or did I stand in front of the microphone too long waiting for my... oh, no, caffeinated coffee to heat? What did I do wrong that would have caused this?"

And the disciples asked that. They asked that of Jesus in John nine. They said, "Here's this blind man, so who sinned? His parents or did he sin?"

Jesus said, "This is for the glory of God."

God's big enough for our whys even when it doesn't fit well and even when we don't feel like we get an immediate answer but only a glimpse. So often God reveals in his Word that we get to see part of the hem of the garment, we don't always get to see the whole story.

So I think for anyone who is going through a situation that is confusing, where there is loss, where there is just this huge why, we believe you're big, we know you could just take care of this like that and you're not, is that God is the master storyteller. He knows what he is doing. He knows where the plot has to change. I don't always understand it. I know what the ultimate end of the book is but we only get to read chapter by chapter in this part of the story. So it's not exactly comforting, it is not clean, it is not precise, but he's big enough for our why and I stay on the lookout for that glimpse.

Betty: I think that's what we have both discovered is he is bigger than the why, actually. He's enough. And he is the comforter and the one that is there and never leaves us when you have those moments when you're lonely, he is always there. And I found that relationship with him to be sweeter and closer and I say, "Now God," not why so much as I'm saying "what?" What's the purpose? What do you want to use this to, to bring glory to you?

And that's what I think we have to realize when we have tragedy come in whatever form it is. God, what do you want to do with this now in my life? How can I be a blessing to those others that are going through something like this or even worse? Make me a blessing.

James: While you all were communicating right here in the last moments I felt like... by the way, the book is in the bookstores. You can get it online. There's so much in here that somebody identifies with what did you do, Lord? Miss a stitch? Did you miss something? What's going on? What are you going to do with it? I think it would be helpful.

But even while y'all were talking I felt like there was someone sitting here that's saying, "I don't think anybody even notices or cares about me." I understand that. Believe me! I felt it a lot when I was a kid, without a father, without a home, moving 15-17 times in 10 years, didn't know anybody. Shy kid. You just feel so overlooked; you feel so out of place.

I remember the night I came to Christ I saw the picture that I had seen in a comic book of Jesus being baptized by John. And he came up out of the water and the words above that God spoke, it said, "This is my beloved son, in whom I'm well pleased."

I'd never heard a father say that to me, no dad. I wanted somebody to say, "That's good! Way to go! Nice run! Nice catch! Nice throw!"

And I remember when I read that, it would be so cool if God would say, "This is my son in whom I'm well pleased."

That is what I heard in the invitation from God for me to come. It was like he whispered into my ear, "If you'll receive Jesus I will be pleased. He will be in you."

And you feel like, listen to me. God didn't overlook you, he didn't miss you. No matter what's happened, he loves you so much! You might not believe this but if you had a hard time getting up I'd help you get up. If you were lonely and hurting and I'd put my arms around you and say, "I care," and you'd know I did. I'm not there, I'm here, but he is there. He wants to pick you up. He wants to hold you. He wants to love you. He wants to let you know you're a pearl of great price. He loves you more than you can imagine. Would you let him hold you? Would you let him heal the hurt?

Father, I pray that for every person right now that feels overlooked, they're not. You gave your own son to die for them that they might have life now -- now -- and eternal. Please, God, give them that grace to even receive you right now; in Jesus' name. Amen.

Ask him to take you in his arms. Let him know you want him to be your master, your Lord, your savior. He has not missed you. You appreciate what Julie has shared with us? Would you like to say thank you? Praise God for those children, all eight of them! I know they're all special and you are.

You know what we're going to give you an opportunity to do? We're going to give you an opportunity to put some smiles on kid's faces. Here's one thing we do this time of the year. We do cleft palate surgery. We've got a little twisted face and sometimes kids will pull back; they don't even want to see themselves in a picture. We've watched them pull back when they did. We're going to give them a smile.

You know what else we're going to do? We're going to give some children little shoes that never had them. I'm telling you, it's going to make them happy.

I want you to just look in on our mission overseer and his wife and children. We can put God's loving arms around them. Watch this very closely. You're going to like this.

On the mission field

Announcer: In 2008, many of you began partnering with LIFE Outreach to provide children with new pairs of shoes at Christmas, as well as corrective surgery for those born with cleft palates. Ever since, we've witnessed firsthand the benefits of Christmas Shoes and Smiles on their health and quality of life.

Recently while distributing these shoes life's mission team had the privilege of blessing a group of children with an extra special act of kindness.

>> Dear Lord, we just thank you so much for Estella and we pray that you will just protect her and may these shoes guide her along the journey but most of all, may she find you and may she experience your love.

>> God, I pray for Desiree today. I pray that he'll just enjoy his new shoes that have been given. So please use these shoes in his life in a very special way; in Jesus' name. Amen.

Some of these children today, we're putting these shoes on their feet. You almost feel their feet just grabbing the shoe. They love it so much. I want to take just a moment to thank all those who have given to have a special impact on the lives of these children. You are changing lives today.

Announcer: With so many dangers to unprotected feet, a difference a pair of shoes makes in a child's physical health is obvious. And with your help, children like these can experience the love of God firsthand.

[Cheering and laughing]

End of clip

In the studio

James: Don't y'all like to see that? Isn't that beautiful to see these little kids happy?

[Applause]

I want to ask my television people to go back to that first little child that was dancing there when we first came on. I want everybody to see that. Look at that! Isn't that the cutest thing?

Just think about something so small that has such a powerful, profound impact. This is big. These are actually very cute little shoes. You'd be glad to put them on. We call them Crocs over here. These are basically the same thing but we get them for just over \$3 a pair; \$36 we can give 10 children a pair of shoes.

Now here's our goal; Betty and I believe we can reach it, 150,000 children, many different nations where the missionaries have said, "Here is an area of great need." There's so much that causes disease in children's feet when they are cut or they get bacteria and even hookworms that can actually destroy their lives. So we want to do that for Christmas.

Then, Betty, we want to give smiles. When you see these little children that they can't smile, they want to smile, well, we're going to do that. Here's what it takes. We're able to do the cleft palate and the facial surgery for \$500 per surgery. I'm asking you, pray, could you give a couple of surgeries? Would you do that? Betty and I gladly, and Lord, we thank you that we can do this, we'll do that. I know everyone can't do that, I understand that. But if you could give one surgery or two, do it.

But here's the thing I want you all to have a part in. Would you give some children shoes?

Betty, we've been giving our viewers now for six years while we've been doing this, we give these little shoes. You take that one. It will look prettier on your hand than it does on mine and it just looks prettier with you holding it. But we've got these all over our Christmas trees now. And here, this year, I want you to look at this, this is such a beautiful, beautiful gift pack. If you would give, think about it, would you give 50 children a pair of shoes? We're going to send you this beautiful gift and it's all six of the shoes that we've been giving over the last six years. I promise you, when people walk in and see your tree, I'm sure they will admire the lights and all the other decor but they're going to notice those shoes and you're going to be able to talk to them about blessing someone with, for many, the first pair of shoes they've ever had.

Would you go to LifeToday.org? And we need to get this now so we can get the shoes to the children by Christmas, begin doing the surgeries at whatever area of let's say support you can give, please do it. LifeToday.org, use your bankcard like a check or dial the number on the screen. Then let us know what you want to do. Use that bankcard. If there's any way that you can give 50 children -- 50 children a pair of shoes with an \$180 gift, we're going to send you the beautiful gift with all those shoes; any gift we'll send you one of the Christmas shoes.

Please, right now, LifeToday.org or dial that number and know you give the shoes, you're going to give the smile. If they need the surgery, that's going to be a miracle and what a blessing that will be. Thank you for blessing others with the love of God. Thanks for making the call. Thanks for making that gift.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Poverty is a killer and because of it, children needlessly suffer not only from a lack of food and clean water but also from a lack of things we take for granted such as a healthy smile or a simple pair of shoes. For most of these children, they've never owned a new pair of shoes. And while that may seem minor in the light of all their needs, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of life-threatening infections that could lead to crippling consequences, disease, and even death.

By responding today you can help *LIFE* immediately secure and begin shipping Christmas shoes to 150,000 children around the world just in time for the holidays. Your gift of \$36 will

help provide ten pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will help provide 20 pairs. And a gift of \$180 will help provide 50 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need.

With your gift of any amount be sure to request this beautifully crafted blue metal shoe ornament, a treasure to place on your tree each holiday season. With your gift of \$180 or more you may also request this keepsake boxed set of *LIFE's* Christmas shoe ornaments.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective cleft palate surgeries. And you may request our "Majesty" bronze sculpture.

Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

End of clip

In the studio

James: I am hoping that you'll get one of these beautiful little shoes; that's for any gift.

Also, if you'd like to have Julie's book, *Raising an Original* -- Wow! -- "Parenting each child according to their unique god-given temperament or challenges." I think it will be a blessing. If you'd like to have it, sure, you can get it in the bookstores but I'll tell you what, you help us give some Shoes and Smiles and you say, "Would you mind sending me Julie's book?" We'll send it to you just to say thank you and to bless you.

Would you join me and Betty in saying thanks again to Julie?

You're a real blessing. Regards to Randy, all the folks there at the church.

Thank you! Bless all of you!